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ABSTRACT

This report presents the recommendations of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE), part of the North Central Association (NCA) of Colleges and Schools, following a comprehensive self-study focusing on the Commission's mission and purposes, its current effectiveness, and its future direction. The self-study involved a review of mission and vision statements, a survey of 900 institutions of higher education, a survey of affiliated institutions (n=251), telephone interviews with 34 individuals representative of stakeholders in higher education, interviews with the commissioners of the CIHE, staff interviews, reviews of documents, and discussions at annual meetings. Results of the self-study are reported in graphs, tables, and narratives. The study resulted in seven major recommendations: (1) modification of the periodic comprehensive review process to address institutional differences; (2) expansion of the communication process to increase understanding about accreditation; (3) review of internal processes/structure to ensure timeliness of response, value-added components, elimination of duplication, and service orientation; (4) encouragement of instructional improvement and greater access to higher education; (5) greater leadership by the NCA in such areas as partnerships with other accrediting agencies and research support; (6) development of a self-reporting format to encourage dialogue and quality improvement by institutions; and (7) continued analysis of the self-study data. Appendices provide additional data tables. (DB)

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ED 419 446

Effective Collaboration For the Twenty-first Century:

The Commission and Its Stakeholders

NE 031 212

The Report and Recommendations of the Committee on Organizational Effectiveness and Future Directions

Presented to the
Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

February 27, 1998

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1

March 16, 1998

To Affiliates, Consultant-Evaluators, friends of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, and stakeholders in its work:

At its November 1995 meeting, the Commission voted to establish a committee and charge it with the responsibilities of evaluating the current effectiveness of the work of the Commission, of proposing the challenges the Commission will face in the future, and of suggesting strategies for meeting them. The committee titled itself the Committee on Organizational Effectiveness and Future Directions (COEFD), and set to work with enthusiasm and commitment. From time to time the Commissioners who served on COEFD reported to the Commission on the Committee's progress. In fact, some of the early interpretation of the surveys completed by institutional representatives and Consultant-Evaluators shaped the Commission's discussions on restructuring; some decisions about Commission staffing resulted from the information as well.

At the Commission's February 1998 meeting, the Commissioners and staff met with members of COEFD, discussed with them the Committee's findings and recommendations, and formally accepted the Committee's report, *Effective Collaboration for the Twenty-first Century: The Commission and Its Stakeholders*. COEFD did excellent work for which the Commission is most grateful. We are proud to submit *Effective Collaboration for the Twenty-first Century: The Commission and Its Stakeholders* for your study and comment. The Commission recognizes the rich resource given it by COEFD: a model for ongoing evaluation requiring the inclusion of many stakeholders in the work of the Commission, a multi-faceted data set on which future evaluations can be structured, and a set of provocative recommendations.

Immediately upon receipt of *Effective Collaboration for the Twenty-first Century* the Commissioners began to discuss the task before them: evaluating the COEFD recommendations, establishing priorities for implementing some of them, and opening up a discussion with all of you about others that involve a significant recasting of the accreditation relationship and processes. The theme of the 1998 Annual Meeting is "The Collaborative Imperative." It is most fitting that during it the first of many discussions on the recommendations in *Effective Collaboration for the Twenty-first Century* will take place. As the report testifies, collaboration between the Commission and its affiliated institutions is basic to the successful history of the Commission; as the report recommends, it will be the foundation for the Commission's effectiveness in the future.

Margaret B. Lee
Chair of the Commission
on Institutions of Higher Education

Steven D. Crow
Executive Director of the Commission
of Institutions of Higher Education

The Commission welcomes and encourages comments on the overall recommendations in this report. Comments should be sent by June 1, 1998, to:

Dr. Steven D. Crow
Executive Director
Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
North Central Association of Colleges and Schools
30 N. LaSalle, Suite 2400
Chicago, Illinois 60602

Fax: (312) 263-7462

E-mail: crow@ncacihe.org

The North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA) was founded in 1895 as a membership organization for educational institutions. The Association established the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE) in 1916. Within this report, "NCA" and "Commission" will be used interchangeably, but this report speaks only to the effectiveness and future of the Commission.

In its commitment to developing and maintaining high standards of excellence, the Commission conducts regular and systematic evaluation of its effectiveness. Both the staff and the Commissioners engage in ongoing examination of policies and practices. Such examination has resulted in substantive changes in procedures for on-site visits, change requests, and other daily activities. The Commission believes that periodically a comprehensive self-evaluation should occur that involves input from all constituencies. To that end, the Commission conducted a survey of its membership in 1974, a comprehensive evaluation of its work in 1981, and an examination of critical issues in 1990. These reviews resulted in revisions of the Mission Statement, General Institutional Requirements, Criteria for Accreditation, the Candidacy Program, and the Policies on Institutional Change as well as support and incorporation of important initiatives such as the Assessment Initiative.

Cognizant of the significant and dynamic changes occurring in higher education generally, and in accreditation specifically, the Commission initiated a comprehensive self-study in January 1996. The evaluation coincided with internal changes occurring within the NCA office. Executive Director Patricia A. Thrash had announced her retirement effective December 31, 1996. On her recommendation, Commissioners agreed that a comprehensive evaluation of the Commission would be beneficial for the pending change in leadership. The Committee on Organizational Effectiveness and Future Directions (COEFD) was formed by the Commissioners and given a charge to:

1. examine the Commission's mission and purposes and its resources for accomplishing its purposes;

2. document its current effectiveness and identify areas for improvement; and

3. propose directions for the Commission's future.

The Committee adopted a multifaceted approach to complete its charge from the Commission including a review of previous studies and the published 100 year history of NCA; an in-depth examination of current accreditation processes; consideration of benchmark practices from business/industry, other regional accrediting agencies, and stakeholders; and data collection using surveys, interviews, and documents.

Committee members reviewed the Commission mission and vision statements; solicited input from Consultant-Evaluators, presidents, and participants at the 1996 Annual Meeting; conducted mailed surveys of all affiliated institutions and a random sample of Consultant-Evaluators; conducted phone interviews of stakeholders; interviewed the Commissioners and the Commission staff; and held focus groups with representatives from various sectors of affiliated institutions during the 1997 Annual Meeting. The Iowa State University Statistical Laboratory conducted the mailed survey component and the Wisconsin Survey Research Laboratory conducted the telephone interviews and provided analysis of the qualitative data.

Mission and Vision Statements

Committee members reviewed the mission statement that had been revised and adopted in 1992 and the vision statement newly written by the Commissioners. Although COEFD submitted proposed revisions to the Commission, the mission and the vision statements known to participants in the surveys were those existing at the time of the Committee's start.

The mission of the Commission of Institutions of Higher Education is

1. to establish requirements and criteria for the accreditation of institutions of higher education and accredit institutions found to meet those requirements and criteria;
2. to strengthen educational and institutional quality through its assistance to its affiliated institutions, its evaluation processes and its programs, publications, and research;
3. to advocate and exercise self-regulation in higher education through effective peer review; and
4. to provide to the public accurate information concerning the relationship of affiliated institutions with the Commission.

The vision statement flows from the mission statement and affirms the Commission's commitment to self-determination, peer review, institutional improvement, and service to students and society. In fulfilling these commitments, the Commission values integrity, quality, civility, and diversity, and through proactive leadership seeks to promote academic excellence, address change, inspire public confidence, and shape the future of higher education. The Committee understands that as part of the Commission's response to this report, these statements will be reviewed and undoubtedly will be revised.

Surveys

A survey was mailed in October 1996 to 993 institutions affiliated with the North Central Association's Commission on Institutions of Higher Education. Nine institutions were considered ineligible for inclusion, leaving 984 institutions in the pool. Of the remaining institutions, a total of 900 institutions responded, yielding a 91% response rate. The survey was sent to the chief executive officer of the institution. A cover letter accompanied the survey indicating that it could be completed by the chief executive officer or forwarded to someone within the institution acquainted with the activities of the Commission.

A survey similar to that sent to affiliated institutions was sent to a sample of 300 Consultant-Evaluators (C-Es) selected from a population of

883. Individuals who were presidents of institutions were advised to complete the C-E survey and forward the institutional survey to another person within the institution. Six respondents were considered ineligible for inclusion. Surveys were received from 251 of the 294 eligible respondents for a response rate of 85%.

Some survey items were designed to follow up on information gathered as a result of member surveys conducted in 1974 and 1980. Others were based on the Commission's mission, statement of purpose, vision, and strategic objectives and on issues identified by members of the Committee. Still others were adapted from items included in surveys recently conducted by other regional associations.

Telephone Interviews

Telephone interviews were conducted with thirty-four individuals who were considered representative of a wide range of stakeholders in higher education and, therefore, in the work of the Commission. Participants included presidents; executive directors of higher education organizations, state coordinating boards, and independent college/university associations; directors of corporate educational centers/units; and chancellors of state higher education organizations. The purpose of the telephone interviews was to obtain opinions about NCA's performance and about necessary changes in accreditation.

Commissioner Interviews

The Commissioners of the CIHE responded to questions related to current NCA activities and future directions. A total of fourteen interviews were conducted.

Staff Interviews

Members of the Committee met with staff members of the Commission office to solicit input regarding strengths of the current processes and recommendations for changes.

Review of Documents

One member of the Committee reviewed a sampling of Commission actions and reports submitted by visiting teams, review panels, and reader panels over a three-year period. Evaluation forms completed by campus representatives, Consultant-Evaluators, and Team Chairs following a site visit were also reviewed.

1996 Annual Meeting Discussions

Discussion was held with Consultant-Evaluators during their pre-conference workshop prior to the 1996 Annual Meeting. Forty-nine C-Es submitted written responses. In addition to individual responses, the participants engaged in roundtable discussions and submitted seven group responses. Input from participants at the Annual Meeting was solicited through a form on the back page of the meeting program booklet and through a general meeting during the conference. Fifty-four individuals returned forms.

1997 Annual Meeting Discussions

Focus group discussions were held with institutional representatives during the 1997 Annual Meeting. The meetings were designed to share the initial results of the institutional surveys and to receive input regarding current effectiveness and future directions. Separate sessions were scheduled for Consultant-Evaluators, presidents, and for representatives from specific institutional types (research/doctoral, public master's/baccalaureate, private master's/baccalaureate, associate, tribal, for-profit, and historically black).

Institutional Surveys

The overall response rate for the institutional survey was 91%. An analysis of the responses by institution type indicated that the participation rate was uniformly high, affirming a representative sample of member institutions (Table 1).

Table 1
Response Rate by Institutional Type

Public	93.9%
Private	89.8%
For-Profit	95.0%
Associate	93.6%
Baccalaureate	93.6%
Master's	86.8%
Doctoral	90.3%

Overall satisfaction with NCA's current effectiveness was high, with 91.1% responding that they are very satisfied or satisfied with current activities. This response compares favorably with responses to an identical question used on surveys conducted in 1974 and 1980 (Table 2) (NCA Quarterly).

Table 2
Response to question:
How satisfied are you as a member institution with the current North Central accreditation activities?

	1974 (n=194)	1980 (n=275)	1996 (n=890)
Very satisfied	19.7%	43.2%	39.8%
Satisfied	66.8%	51.5%	51.3%
subtotal	86.5%	94.7%	91.1%
Not very well satisfied	11.9%	4.6%	8.3%
Dissatisfied 1.6%	0.9%	0.6%	
subtotal	13.5%	5.3%	8.9%

The results of the surveys were grouped into two categories relating to effectiveness of the Commission's current practices and policies and to future directions that the Commission should consider as it responds to the changing environment for higher education and accreditation. Summary tables appear in the Appendix. Responses for most items were based on a five point scale (e.g., strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree).

Current Effectiveness

Respondents were asked to evaluate the current activities of the Commission as well as its effectiveness in facilitating changes. They were also asked to evaluate the benefits of institutional accreditation.

Several items received uniformly high satisfaction ratings from all types of institutions. Receiving 80% or higher ratings of "very satisfied" or "satisfied" were the peer review process (86.9%), General Institutional Requirements (81.8%), civility of teams (86.4%), clear communication of decisions to institutions (91.4%), promoting of institutional integrity (82.6%), allowing for autonomy and self determination (83.9%), and preparation of Team Chairs (81.7%). The five Criteria for Accreditation were rated exceptionally high, with satisfaction ranging from 94.4% to 98.8% (Table 3).

Table 3
Rating of Criteria for Accreditation

	Appropriate/Very Appropriate
Criterion 1: Clear and publicly stated purposes	98.7%
Criterion 2: Effectively organized resources	98.1%
Criterion 3: Accomplishing its purposes	98.8%
Criterion 4: Can continue to accomplish its purposes	96.6%
Criterion 5: Demonstrates integrity in its practices	94.4%

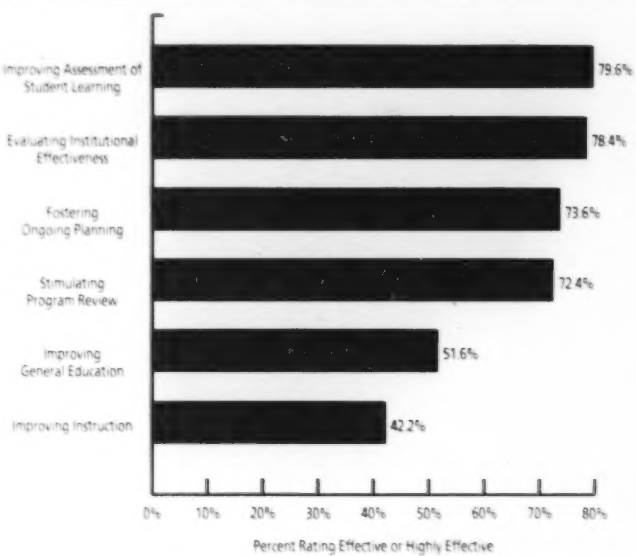
Fewer institutions agreed that the Commission gives appropriate consideration to distance education (42%) and appropriate review of international and other off-site programs (28%), but a significant proportion of respondents provided neutral responses for those items (42% distance education, 52% international programs).

Only half of the respondents agree that the NCA takes negative action when warranted (51% strongly agree or agree, 36% neutral, 10% disagree or strongly disagree, 3% no response).

Fifty-three percent of the respondents rated the benefits of accreditation to be greater or significantly greater than the cost; 33% rated the costs and benefits to be equal; and 13% rated the costs to be greater or significantly greater than the benefits.

NCA accreditation was considered beneficial for encouraging the use of student outcomes as a tool to improve teaching and learning processes (89%), identifying important issues institutions need to address (89%), stimulating institutional improvement (85%), assuring that institutions are meeting minimum standards of educational quality (85%), certifying that institutions are meeting their educational objectives (85%), promoting academic excellence (80%), and helping meet accountability requirements (80%). Fewer respondents perceived that accreditation encourages innovation (35% agree or strongly agree), promotes articulation and coordination among member institutions (45%), and promotes articulation between institutions of higher education and secondary schools (27%).

Figure 1
Effectiveness of Accrediting Process at Facilitating Institutional Change

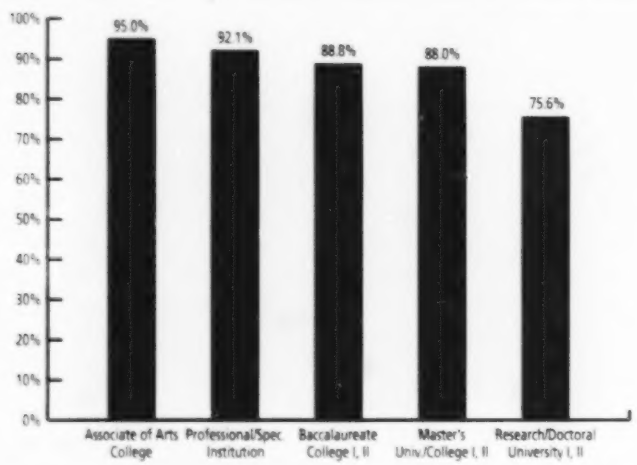


Respondents gave high ratings to the effectiveness of the accreditation process in improving the assessment of student learning and evaluating institutional effectiveness. As shown in Figure 1, fewer than half of the respondents indicated that the accreditation process was effective in improving instruction (42% very effective or effective, 40% neutral, 14% ineffective or very ineffective, 4% no change needed or no response).

Responses often varied by institutional type (research/doctoral, master's, baccalaureate,

associate) with research/doctoral institutions providing less favorable ratings. For example, respondents from research/doctoral universities expressed a lower level of overall satisfaction with NCA accreditation processes (75.6% satisfied or very satisfied) compared to respondents from all institutions (91.1%). The research/doctoral universities were less likely to believe that the benefits of accreditation outweigh the costs, and generally gave lower ratings for the effectiveness of the accreditation process in facilitating change and for the benefits of institutional accreditation.

Figure 2
Percent Satisfied or Very Satisfied with NCA Activities



Future Directions

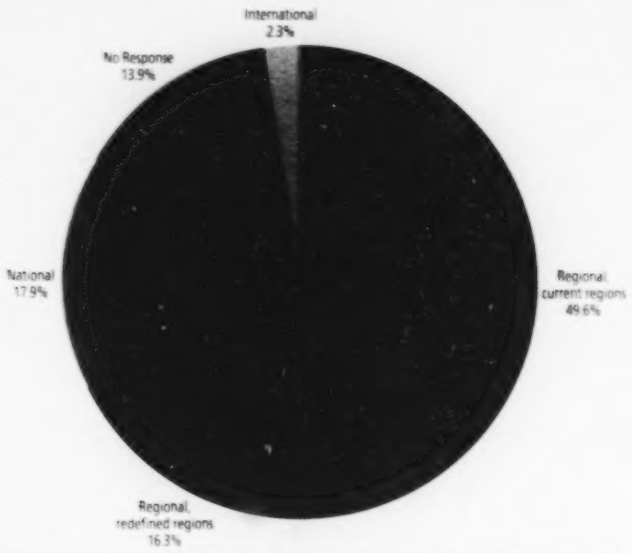
Respondents were asked to rate the likely impact of a number of educational and societal trends on future activities of the NCA and to provide input regarding potential changes in NCA policies and practices.

Trends considered to have the highest impact on future NCA activities were: increasing demands for accountability (80% of respondents rated the potential impact at 4-5 on a five-point scale), expanding use of distance education (78%), increasing attention to teaching and learning (72%), and expanding use of the Internet (71%). Trends considered to have a lower impact on accreditation were: changing views of tenure (48%), developing a national data base for higher education (44%), and changing methods of paying for higher education (43%). Other trends that have received attention in the media but were perceived to have a major impact on accreditation by only about half of the respondents were increasing use of adjunct/part time faculty (60%), increasing competition for students (53%), changing student demographics (54%), increasing international activity by institution (52%), increasing collaboration among institutions (53%) or between institutions and industry (54%), and workplace needs for retraining (56%).

All types of institutions encouraged increased consideration of institutional uniqueness (80%). Additionally, relatively strong support was given for separate accreditation processes by institutional type (66%) or alternative processes for well-established institutions (71%) as well as increased attention to non-traditional practices in higher education (69%).

When queried about the scope of the boundaries for the agency, nearly 50% of the respondents indicated that accreditation should be regional with currently defined regions, while 16% indicated that the region should be re-defined, and nearly 18% recommended national accreditation (two percent indicated that it should be international, while 14% did not respond).

Figure 3
Future Accreditation Preferences



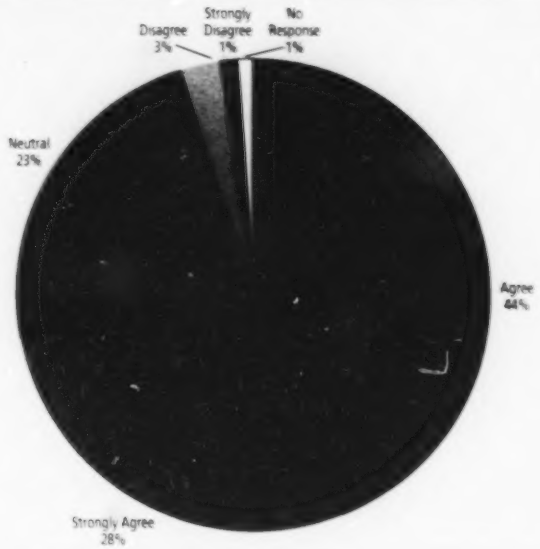
Institutions appeared to favor increased emphasis on qualitative factors (74%); only 25% favored increased emphasis on quantitative factors.

Institutions encouraged NCA to conduct more research on accreditation (72%) while the reaction to conducting more workshops was less positive (62%) with the option of "neutral" receiving 30% of the responses.

The majority of institutions did not support increased disclosure of the results of institutional evaluation to the public (47% strongly agree or agree, 29% neutral, 24% disagree or strongly disagree).

Nearly 72% of the respondents indicated that NCA should increase communication with Congress, state/federal agencies, and other organizations to strengthen the understanding of voluntary accreditation.

Figure 4
The NCA should increase communication with Congress, state/federal agencies and other organizations to strengthen the understanding of voluntary accreditation.



Additionally, 66% agreed that NCA should assume a leadership role in advocating higher education issues. Sixty-nine percent believe that NCA should make greater use of technology in the accreditation process.

Further analysis of the results indicated differences by type of institution. Associate of Arts colleges (AA) tended to rate higher the likely impact of several trends on the future activities of the NCA. Research/doctoral institutions tended to view as smaller the likely impact of many trends.

Associate degree institutions viewed increasing attention to teaching and learning having a high impact on future accreditation activities (81%) while others rated this item lower (research/doctoral 62%, professional 66%, baccalaureate 68%, master's 72%).

Associate and professional/specialized institutions agreed most strongly that accreditation

promotes academic excellence (90%, 86%), stimulates institutional improvement (92%, 89%) and inspires public confidence (81%, 79%). Research/doctoral institutions gave the lowest ratings for each of the above items (55%, 62%, and 63%, respectively).

More than 80% of respondents at all types of institutions except research/doctoral indicated that accreditation assures that an institution is meeting minimum standards of educational quality (all in mid to high 80% range except research/doctoral at 67%). However, respondents were less favorable regarding whether accreditation develops consensus on standards of good practice in higher education (70% strongly agree or agree). Research/doctoral was lowest at 50%.

Consultant-Evaluator Survey

Consultant-Evaluators also indicated a high level of satisfaction with overall NCA activities, with 89.6% indicating that they are very satisfied or satisfied. Of the 251 responding C-Es, 51% had made between four and twenty comprehensive visits, 10% had made more than twenty comprehensive visits, 45% had made focused visits, and 30% had served as a Team Chair.

Many of the questions on the Consultant-Evaluator survey were identical to those of the institutional survey, and responses followed similar patterns. In some areas, however, the C-E responses differed from those of the institutional respondents. In general, C-Es rated the current effectiveness of NCA accreditation processes more highly than did the institutional respondents. C-Es tended to agree more strongly that team reports provide a balanced assessment of institutional strengths and weaknesses (96% of C-Es and 78% of institutions agree or strongly agree). C-Es also rated more highly the preparation of the Team Chair (94% of C-Es, 82% of institutions agree or strongly agree) and the preparation of other team members (89% of C-Es, 75% of institutions agree or strongly agree). They were more likely to believe that teams have individuals with appropriate expertise (94% of C-Es, 78% of institutions agree or strongly agree) and that team members provide helpful consultation as well as evaluation (90% of C-Es, 74% of institutions agree or strongly agree). However, C-Es were less likely to agree that the NCA promotes institutional integrity (81% of C-Es, 83% of institutions agree or strongly agree).

In a ranking of items concerning current effectiveness, the C-Es ranked higher the statement that "the NCA acts fairly and equitably in applying criteria to member institutions" (ranked 7th by C-Es, 12th by institutions), but ranked lower the statements that "the NCA clearly communicates its decisions to institutions" (ranked 6th by C-Es, first by institutions) and that "the NCA accreditation process allows a reasonable measure of operational autonomy and self-determination by member institutions" (ranked 10th by C-Es, 4th by institutions). Like the institutions, the C-Es gave the lowest ratings to statements concerning the consideration of distance learning, the use of new technologies, and international programs.

Consultant-Evaluators also tended to rate the benefits of institutional accreditation more highly than did the institutional respondents. They rated most highly the benefit that institutional accreditation identifies important issues that institutions need to address (92% agree or strongly agree) and that it encourages the use of student outcomes assessment as a tool to improve teaching and learning processes (91% agree or strongly agree). Like the institutional respondents, C-Es were less likely to believe that accreditation promotes academic excellence (80% agree or strongly agree) although the ratings on this item were still quite positive. The lowest ratings were for the extent to which accreditation encourages innovation in member

institutions (41% agree or strongly agree) and promotes articulation with secondary schools (24% agree or strongly agree).

Consultant-Evaluators believe, as do the institutional respondents, that the expanding use of distance learning and increasing demands for accountability will have the greatest impact on the future activities of the NCA. C-Es rated more highly the likely impact of increasing international activity (ranked 8th by C-Es and 18th by institutions), the increasing number of programs offered in more than one accrediting region (C-Es ranked 5th, institutions ranked 10th) and increasing use of adjunct and part-time faculty (C-Es ranked 6th, institutions ranked 11th). However, they saw relatively less impact of increasing attention to teaching and learning (ranked 9th by C-Es, 3rd by institutions) and increasing use of computers for instruction and instructional support (ranked 11th by C-Es, 6th by institutions).

Concerning future NCA accreditation, Consultant-Evaluators tended to agree with the institutional respondents that accreditation should place increased emphasis on qualitative factors and give increased attention to non-traditional practices in higher education. C-Es were less likely to believe that accreditation should provide for increased consideration of institutional uniqueness (69% of C-Es and 80% of institutions agree or strongly agree) or that it should provide for alternative processes for the reaccreditation of well-established institutions (55% of C-Es and 71% of institutions agree or strongly agree). They were also less likely to support the provision of separate processes for different types of institutions (50% of C-Es and 66% of institutions agree or strongly agree) and consideration of alternatives to site visits for comprehensive evaluations (18% of C-Es and 45% of institutions agree or strongly agree). C-Es were more likely to believe that accreditation should be more of an ongoing continuous process (57% of C-Es and 47% of institutions agree or strongly agree), and were more likely to support increased faculty and student involvement in the accreditation process. Differences in responses may reflect differences in institutional type, and some of the C-E responses seemed to reflect those of institutions other than research/doctoral. The C-E respondents, however, included a larger proportion from research/doctoral institutions than did the institutional respondents.

In looking to the future of the NCA, the Consultant-Evaluators agreed that the NCA should conduct more research on accreditation. They were more likely to agree that the NCA should conduct more workshops and training programs related to new initiatives (75% of C-Es and 62% of institutions agree or strongly agree) and that the NCA should encourage increased disclosure of the results of institutional evaluation to the public (60% of C-Es and 47% of institutions agree or strongly agree).

Consultant-Evaluators were also asked a series of questions concerning their experiences in serving on evaluation teams. They were most satisfied with the collegiality of accreditation teams (95% satisfied or very satisfied), the materials provided to C-Es prior to visits (94% satisfied or very satisfied), the ability of teams to reach consensus (94% satisfied or very satisfied), and the professionalism of teams (93% satisfied or very satisfied). They also rate highly the extent to which team reports are based on the General Institutional Requirements and the Criteria for Accreditation (90% satisfied or very satisfied) and the timeliness of the office in payment of honoraria and expenses (90% satisfied or very satisfied). They are much less satisfied with the feedback given to C-Es (30% satisfied or very satisfied) and the reappointment process for C-Es (47% satisfied or very satisfied).

Staff Interviews

Interviews with the Commission staff affirmed the role and value of the peer review process. The work of individuals representing all types of member institutions was considered a strength of the Commission. The staff noted that increased involvement of representatives from research/doctoral institutions as well as presidents from all types of institutions would be beneficial.

The large number of institutions assigned to each staff member was considered to be a possible hindrance in meeting the unique needs of particular institutions. The staff noted that increased use of e-mail and other technology may streamline communication between the Commission office and the institutions.

The challenges related to the changing environment in higher education and the ability to respond to these challenges concerned several staff members. Of particular concern were distance learning, finance, and commercial ventures in curriculum development and delivery.

Telephone Interviews

Thirty-four interviews with stakeholders of higher education were conducted during March 1997. Respondents provided opinions regarding NCA's current effectiveness and necessary changes in accreditation.

The majority of respondents agreed that accreditation is valuable, stressing that it will be increasingly important as students have access to a broader range of courses, programs, and institutions. Perceived changes in the educational environment that could have an impact on accreditation included economic issues, technology, and society's changing sense of the value of a college education.

The positive attributes of accreditation they noted included its importance to the federal government in certifying the quality of the educational experience, its assistance to institutions in addressing quality questions that otherwise may not be pursued, its communication to external communities that certified institutions conform to acceptable standards (quality assurance), and its ability to enable smaller campuses to keep abreast of changes in administration, governance, and instruction. Other positive comments included the importance of the peer review process and NCA's leadership in the Assessment Initiative. NCA's publications and meetings were praised for their student-centered focus, broad participation, and attention to current topics in higher education.

Negative comments included the cost and human resource investment that must be devoted to the accreditation process, excessive focus on input measures, inadequate preparation of site teams, and accreditation of "undeserving" institutions. The value of accreditation for large research universities with international reputations was questioned.

The participants offered several suggestions for improvement. Among them were: development of uniform standards among regional associations; more interaction with specialized accrediting bodies; improvement of quality assurance in adult education programs; broader representation on evaluation teams, including persons from government and business, trustees/regents, and other public individuals; and encouragement of institutions to develop their own internal mechanism for measuring quality. It was also suggested that NCA increase its technical assistance to member institutions and strengthen linkages with K-12 education.

1996 Annual Meeting

Feedback was solicited from attendees of the 1996 Annual Meeting. Written responses were provided by forty-nine Consultant-Evaluators and fifty-four other attendees to the following four questions:

- What does the Commission do well?
- What does the Commission not do well?
- What can the Commission do better?
- What should the Commission do in the future?

Respondents identified as strengths the Commission's publications, meetings, and training efforts for team members and self-study coordinators. They also noted the importance of the peer review process, responsiveness and assistance of the staff, and positive communication efforts. Consultant-Evaluators specifically noted as a strength NCA's efforts to stay abreast of current issues in higher education.

Responses to the question: "What does the Commission not do well?" addressed needs to provide more specific guidelines for distance education and for the self-study process. Respondents also expressed frustration regarding the time between the visit and the final approval from the Commission as well as the delay in receiving responses for assessment plans. Consultant-Evaluators indicated that NCA should clarify the importance of accreditation to education consumers as well as reinforce the purpose of NCA as a membership organization.

Attendees suggested that the Commission could improve the composition of teams and the training of team members as well as clarify the purposes and processes for the accreditation visit. This perception appeared to be shared by the Consultant-Evaluators who indicated that the training for C-Es should be expanded and that C-Es should be evaluated more effectively. Both groups recommended that the Commission maintain ongoing communication with affiliated institutions and increase visibility with the public as well governmental agencies.

Recommendations for the future included enhancing the use of technology, being more customer-oriented, increasing public awareness of accreditation, improving public relations efforts, establishing relationships with other higher education agencies and other accrediting groups, involving more presidents in the process, improving the quality/preparation of Annual Meeting speakers, and developing policies concerning new delivery methods.

Interviews with Commissioners

Commissioners were interviewed using seven questions. The Commissioners consistently stated that regional accrediting agencies should play a strong leadership role in setting the agenda for higher education. In addition to the Commission's working cooperatively and collaboratively with the other regional accrediting agencies, the Commissioners indicated that the regional agencies should be partners with other national entities in discussing issues.

Responding to the question, "What does NCA do well?", the Commissioners identified as a strength the peer review process including the training and development of C-Es. Other comments included the use of patterns of evidence to identify strengths/weaknesses of the institution, willingness to take risks, and staff interaction with individual institutions.
The Commissioners offered numerous suggestions to improve the accreditation processes. These included streamlining the processes and reducing the time frame between the visit and Commission action; identifying more cost-effec-

tive methods than focus visits to monitor institutional change; examining whether reports provide a value added benefit to institutions; focusing more on outcomes than process; reducing the number of institutions per staff member; considering a stratified rating system that differentiates high quality institutions from those that simply meet baseline standards; developing higher standards for graduate education; and providing an expert resource base to consult with institutions that need assistance.

Several Commissioners indicated that changes in NCA goals/methods will be determined by a redefinition of accreditation. The Commissioners indicated that, as the national agenda unfolds, regional accreditation will need to define the meaning of a quality institution. The Commission will be challenged to have a vision for education and to continually improve its processes.

1997 Annual Meeting

Group discussions were held with institutional representatives during the 1997 Annual Meeting to obtain additional input regarding current effectiveness and future directions. Sessions were held with Consultant-Evaluators, presidents, and representatives from research/doctoral, public master's/baccalaureate, private master's/baccalaureate, associate, tribal, for-profit, and historically black institutions.

Participants across sectors strongly reaffirmed the strength of peer review and the self-study process. Suggestions were offered to improve team composition, site visit preparation, and both the self-study and team reports. NCA's leadership in promoting the Assessment Initiative was recognized by participants even though many acknowledged that implementation at the campus level often lagged. Participants also noted that quality assurance for students and the public is an integral component of accreditation. They were less comfortable with how public disclosure should be handled.

Comments from participants following presentation of survey data provided suggestions to improve current effectiveness. These included ideas to make the site visit more productive through additional pre-planning activities, use of the Internet and other technologies, inclusion of individuals from outside constituencies or regions on the team, and utilizing individuals who may not be C-Es but hold unique expertise. Development of an audit process or interim monitoring system was suggested to encourage continuous improvement processes as well as to identify problems during the period between site visits.

Participants encouraged NCA to assume a leadership role in addressing higher education issues with the public, policy makers, and higher education agencies and organizations. Many identified a need for additional workshops or regional meetings in addition to the Annual Meeting. Several groups noted changes occurring within higher education_especially distance learning, instructional technology, and other innovations_as issues that will have an impact on accreditation. They also encouraged NCA to assume a more active role in conducting research related to these and other issues.

Three members of the Committee presented an overview of the preliminary findings of the research and solicited additional input from presidents attending the Annual Meeting. Attention was focused on items relating to institutional differences, the process of change, distance learning, and the use of the Internet. The salient points raised were: 1) There was general support for more public disclosure, with the normal reservations about media processing; 2) There was a general feeling that the existing system was working well but that more attention should be placed on the role of institutional mission; 3) Concern was expressed about sepa-

rating the accreditation process in a way that might effectively create barriers between the various higher education sectors. Emphasis was placed on commonalities (coherence of learning) rather than differences (size and complexity). There was a general sense that differences should be addressed in preplanning activities and team membership; 4) In terms of distance learning, it was suggested that emphasis should be placed on quality assurance at the home-base institution; 5) NCA needs to place greater emphasis on its role of quality assurance; 6) NCA needs to provide greater leadership in expanding the understanding of accreditation among political, business, and community leaders.

One member of the Committee met with Consultant-Evaluators who participated in training sessions prior to the Annual Meeting. Many of their comments were related to methods to improve the C-E Corps and the site visit. Suggestions included: 1) Increase the number of team members, especially for multi-site visits; 2) Extend the visits by one day to allow for writing the report prior to leaving the campus; 3) Clearly explain the appointment/re-appointment process for C-Es; 4) Provide more feedback to C-Es and Team Chairs following the visit. Information from the campus should be provided to the team as well as the evaluation information submitted by the Team Chair; 5) Increase use of the Internet to communicate with team members; 6) Conduct more state or regional meetings during the year on special topics. It was felt that an increased presence on a local level would enhance the visibility of NCA as well as the opportunities for individuals to interact with NCA representatives.

One of the Committee members hosted a meeting including approximately forty representatives from baccalaureate and master's public institutions. Following a brief overview of the preliminary findings, discussion shifted to what might make the current system more effective. Suggestions focused on the following areas: 1) The team composition is the most important factor in addressing institutional differences. Several individuals expressed the need for outside representation, particularly from business and the public schools; 2) Preplanning activities should be added to better address institutional differences and unique features; 3) Steps need to be taken to better connect Criterion 1 with other criteria statements; 4) There was no support for segmenting the process based on institutional differences; 5) In measuring nontraditional delivery models, more attention should be given to the overall cost as well as their budgetary impact on campus-based programs; 6) Concern was expressed over the perceived low impact of accreditation in improving instruction, encouraging innovation, and articulating with K-12 institutions; 7) Steps need to be taken to provide a more ongoing accreditation process. Ten years is too long; 8) Self-study reports need to be simplified — less verbiage and more lists, bullets, and action-oriented language; 9) It was felt that some institutions are hiring professional writers for the self-study, thereby minimizing the positive impact of internal self-study.

Two Committee members met with approximately 100 representatives from associate degree granting institutions. Discussion focused on increased disclosure of information, accountability, assessment, and transfer barriers between two- and four-year institutions. Representatives indicated that aggregate data should be used for public disclosure purposes rather than releasing specific information from the SAS or team report. Representatives also discussed transferability of courses especially general education. There was agreement that transferability was an important issue for associate degree granting institutions.

One Committee member met with approximately 30 representatives of the research/doctoral universities. Differences in survey responses from the research/doctoral universities and those of the other institution types were discussed. Participants

suggested that current accreditation processes might be of less value to the research/doctoral universities than to others because they are more likely to have internal processes in place to accomplish the same objectives. It was suggested that an audit procedure might provide an alternative process for accreditation of established institutions. This would involve an initial audit to be conducted by the institution and reviewed by the Commission staff. A visiting team could validate that the institution's quality assurance processes are sound and could then focus on substantive issues in more depth. Additional suggestions from attendees included: 1) Expand recruitment of Consultant-Evaluators from research/doctoral institutions by asking Team Chairs and graduate deans to nominate individuals from their home institutions, and by recruiting persons who have served on institutional self-study committees; 2) Invite specialists for one-time visits without requiring complete C-E training and without a long-term commitment. This might help to attract CEOs and other high level administrators from the research/doctoral universities; 3) Improve the balance of teams to ensure that the necessary areas of expertise are provided; 4) Focus on patterns of evidence and limited areas of interest rather than a presentation of everything the institution does;
5) Consider increased cooperation with the professional accrediting agencies, both in sharing data and in sharing the results of evaluations;
6) Make greater use of technology in accrediting processes, including the availability of institutional materials on the Internet; 7) Look to other reviews of excellence, such as the Baldrige Awards, for suggestions and ideas for research on criteria and the accreditation processes.

One committee member met with representatives of the for-profit institutions. Participants in the session were generally positive in their views of the Commission and were appreciative of the Commission's interest in their input. They suggested that it is very important that the Commission be willing to listen to non-traditional institutions and those with distance education programs, and that the Commission provide opportunities for these institutions to demonstrate their commitment to quality. It was also noted that the outcomes assessment emphasis is important for institutions offering distance education programs since it should be possible to measure learning outcomes regardless of the mode of delivery of the educational program. Other suggestions included: 1) offer sessions in future Annual Meetings on distance education and on the evaluation of learning achieved through distance education; 2) recognize major differences in types and quality of distance education, and recognize institutional uniqueness;
3) recognize the value of practical experience as well as formal credentials for faculty, particularly for institutions with applied and technology-oriented programs. Attendees also commented that a major benefit of accreditation for them is that of conferring eligibility for Title IV funding. It is also important to be able to demonstrate to potential customers that their institution is "accredited." Regional accreditation is more important than specialized accreditation in assurances to potential students and businesses.

One member of the Committee met with representatives of historically black colleges and universities. The representatives indicated high levels of satisfaction with assistance received from the NCA staff prior to and during the self-study process. They also praised the agenda and slate of presenters for the Annual Meeting. Suggestions from attendees included: 1) offer a track during the Annual Meeting for Trustees/Regents; 2) provide workshops or special reports based on topics from the Annual Meeting. It was felt that these activities would continue awareness and dialogue of the issues throughout the year; 3) provide avenues for institutions to share resources and establish networks when new initiatives are established. Such efforts may have assisted institutions in implementing assessment programs; 4) establish contact with agencies affiliated with minority groups, such as the United Negro College Fund.

The following recommendations are based on the intent to:

- increase the value of the accreditation process to institutions
- encourage mission driven decision making
- recognize diversity and uniqueness among member institutions
- require less intrusiveness at the campus level
- integrate accreditation and other quality assurance activities
- encourage ongoing quality improvement

Furthermore, the recommendations have been developed to revise and strengthen the current paradigm for accreditation. The committee believes that the results of this study suggest high levels of satisfaction with most aspects of the current processes as follows:

- There is significant value in self-regulation and peer review.
- There is high satisfaction with the current processes, although the level of support varies by type of institution.
- The Criteria for Accreditation and General Institutional Requirements are appropriate.
- There is a high level of professionalism throughout the organization.
- The traditional accreditation processes are effective and well-understood among member institutions.

Based on the results, the Committee believes the following areas should receive attention and offers specific recommendations:

- Expanded focus should be placed on the site visit, including training of Consultant-Evaluators, preparation for the visit by team members, and feedback to team members.
- Additional effort should be taken to customize the processes so the accreditation process more effectively recognizes unique missions and levels of institutional maturity (such as strategic planning, program review, specialized accreditation).
- Accreditation processes should be modified to make the processes more integral and more connected to the ongoing activities of member institutions.

In addition, the Committee believes the following perceptions should receive attention:

- Member institutions and external stakeholders do not share the same opinions regarding the accreditation processes.
- The membership expects increased leadership and service without more expense, staff, or institutional workload.
- Institutions agree on current trends or issues but often do not connect their impact with the regular accreditation process.
- There is a perception that NCA does not make hard decisions when warranted or that some institutions are accredited that should not be. However, there are strong feelings that there should not be increased disclosure or additional quantitative measures.
- There is strong commitment to NCA but it is not necessarily locked into the existing regional configuration.

The Committee notes that significant change has occurred during the past two years within NCA and that some of the following recommenda-

tions are already being addressed. The Committee on Organizational Effectiveness and Future Directions recommends that:

1. The periodic comprehensive review process should be modified to more effectively address institutional differences. Specific attention should be focused on:

   a. Expanding Criterion 1 to place greater specificity on the unique qualities and features of the mission of the institution

   b. Providing additional pre-visit opportunities to define the uniqueness of the institution and delineating how the priorities of the institution should shape the accreditation process

   c. Placing greater emphasis on the composition of teams to ensure expanded responsiveness to institutional differences

   d. Establishing ways in which the mission statement shapes responses and delineates evaluative/outcome measures for each of the criteria

   e. Redirecting the self-study process to emphasize and assess ongoing quality assurance and quality improvement processes and to integrate the results of other quality initiatives

2. The communication process should be greatly expanded to increase the level of understanding about accreditation. Specific attention should be given to:

   a. Disseminating NCA materials to presidents, chief academic officers, business officers, student affairs officers, academic deans, library directors, and faculty senate and union leaders. Electronic communication and new technologies should be used whenever feasible

   b. Encouraging two-way communication between the NCA staff members and institutions, especially regarding the self-governing and professional peer monitoring of institutions accredited through NCA

   c. Hosting, in concert with institutions or state agencies/organizations, regional and statewide meetings on a regular basis

   d. Providing information to state/federal agencies, legislators, economic/opinion leaders, and other stakeholders

   e. Assuming a leadership role in advocating higher education issues with Congress, state/federal agencies, and other organizations.

3. Internal processes/structures should be reviewed to ensure timeliness of response, value added components, elimination of duplication, and service orientation to effectively address change and meet institutional needs by:

   a. Reviewing timelines between site visit and action by the Commission

   b. Reviewing response time for items directed to the NCA staff

   c. Evaluating allocation of staff workload, roles, responsibilities, and assignments

   d. Encouraging increased utilization of new technologies

4. Increased attention should be focused on the encouragement of improvement of teaching, stimulation of learner-centered instruction, and fostering of greater access to higher education. NCA should develop appropriate responses to innovative instructional

approaches and the dynamic educational environment by placing immediate focus on:

a. Delivery models such as distance learning, Internet, and instructional technologies

b. Globalization/internationalization

c. Partnership/collaboration with business/industry, K-12 schools, and other agencies.

5. NCA needs to assume a leadership role in such areas as:

a. Developing strong partnerships with other regional accreditation agencies and specialized accreditation agencies

b. Providing research support

c. Seeking opportunities for collaboration and joint projects with other higher education agencies

d. Promoting accreditation within the broader education community.

6. The relationship between NCA and institutions should be reconceptualized to encourage ongoing dialogue and quality improvement by developing a self-reporting format that includes:

a. Developing an annual profile, based on existing data when possible. The annual profile could include indicators that illustrate continuity or significant change in status such as: financial, delivery models, location, programs, leadership, student data, specialized accreditation, etc., that are consistent with national and specialized accreditation efforts

b. Requesting action plans that address concerns from the comprehensive visit team report

c. Continuing to use the Commission-defined change process but only to address significant new institutional directions

d. Implementing five-year interim reports that consider major environmental shifts, learning outcomes, and quality assurance processes

e. Establishing ten-year review processes as the normal time format for a site visit unless triggered earlier by a significant institutional change

7. The Committee believes that continued analysis of the data obtained through this study may lead to additional insights and that the results reported here could be considered as a baseline for ongoing program review and evaluation

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End Note

This report is available on the Commission's web site (www.ncacihe.org). The following supporting documents are also available on the web site:

- Commission mission and vision statements
- COEFD surveys and cover letters
- COEFD interview protocols
- List of the questions discussed

Members of the Committee on Organizational Effectiveness and Future Directions

Committee Chair:
Dr. Kay K. Schallenkamp
President
Emporia State University
Emporia, KS

Committee Members:
Dr. Leslie H. Cochran
President
Youngstown State University
Youngstown, OH

Mr. Richard R. Fairbanks
Manager, Community Partnering Department
Sandia National Laboratories
Albuquerque, NM

Dr. John Howard Jacobson
President
Hope College
Holland, MI

Dr. Margaret B. Lee
President
Oakton Community College
Des Plaines, IL

Dr. Rosetta Taylor Moore
Associate Dean, The Graduate School
St. Louis University
St. Louis, MO

Dr. Elizabeth C. Stanley
Director of Institutional Research
Iowa State University
Ames, IA

Ex Officio as Chair of Commission 1996-1997:
Dr. Dorothy I. MacConkey
President
Davis & Elkins College
Elkins, WV

Staff:
Dr. Steven D. Crow
Acting Executive Director/Deputy Director
(prior to August 8, 1997)
Executive Director (effective August 8, 1997)
Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
North Central Association of Colleges and Schools
Chicago, IL

Dr. Patricia A. Thrash
Executive Director (until December 31, 1996)
Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
North Central Association of Colleges and Schools
Chicago, IL

Committee on Organizational Effectiveness and Future Directions

Survey of Member Institutions
October 1996

Overall Satisfaction

How satisfied are you as a member institution with the current North Central accreditation activities?

	n	Percent Satisfied or Very Satisfied
All responding member institutions	900	90.1%
Public	466	91.4%
Private	415	88.4%
Proprietary	19	94.7%
Research/Doctoral Universities I, II	78	75.6%
Masters Univ./Colleges I, II	158	88.0%
Baccalaureate Colleges I, II	223	88.8%
Associate of Arts Colleges	301	95.0%
Professional/Specialized Institutions	140	92.1%
HBCUs (included above)	8	100.0%
Tribal Colleges (included above)	13	84.6%
Candidate	27	96.4%
Accredited	863	90.1%
No response	10	70.0%
Time since last visit		
0-2 years	265	90.2%
3-5 years	279	92.8%
6-10 years	346	88.5%
Unknown	10	70.0%
Position of respondent		
Chief Executive	493	90.9%
Chief Acad. Officer, Provost, VP	330	84.9%
Other	71	90.1%
No response	6	67.7%
Total enrollment		
0-499	118	94.1%
500-1,999	303	88.8%
2,000-4,999	221	93.2%
5,000-9,999	112	91.9%
10,000-19,999	83	87.9%
20,000 and over	63	77.7%

Committee on Organizational Effectiveness and Future Directions

Survey of Member Institutions
October 1996

Evaluation of Current NCA Accreditation Process

As you think of the *current* overall NCA accreditation process, indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

	Percent Who Agree or Strongly Agree					
	All Institutions	Assoc. of Arts College	Bacc. College	Master's Univ/ College	Res/Doct Univ	Prof/Spec Inst
The NCA clearly communicates its decisions to institutions.	91.4%	94.0%	89.2%	89.9%	89.8%	92.1%
NCA use of peer review is a strength of the current process.	86.9%	91.0%	85.2%	83.6%	87.2%	84.3%
NCA accreditation teams practice a high degree of civility in their deliberations with institutions.	86.4%	88.4%	87.0%	81.6%	83.3%	88.6%
The NCA accreditation process allows a reasonable measure of operational autonomy and self-determination by member institutions.	83.9%	90.0%	83.0%	81.7%	65.4%	85.0%
The NCA promotes institutional integrity.	82.6%	88.4%	82.1%	81.0%	68.0%	80.7%
The General Institutional Requirements define an appropriate universe of institutions for Commission affiliation.	81.8%	86.7%	82.5%	80.4%	66.7%	80.0%
NCA team chairs are adequately prepared.	81.7%	85.7%	81.2%	81.6%	65.4%	82.9%
NCA decisions are made in a timely manner.	78.2%	84.7%	77.6%	74.1%	61.5%	79.3%
NCA accreditation teams have individuals with appropriate expertise.	78.1%	83.4%	78.0%	74.1%	61.5%	80.7%
Accreditation team reports provide a balanced assessment of institutional strengths and weaknesses.	78.0%	84.7%	78.9%	71.5%	59.0%	80.0%
NCA publications are helpful to institutions.	77.8%	83.4%	76.6%	76.6%	70.5%	71.4%
The NCA acts fairly and equitably in applying criteria to member institutions.	76.6%	85.4%	73.5%	70.3%	69.2%	73.6%
NCA accreditation teams are composed of knowledgeable and objective individuals.	75.4%	80.1%	76.2%	74.1%	57.7%	75.7%
Other NCA accreditation team members are adequately prepared.	75.4%	80.4%	76.2%	72.8%	55.1%	77.9%
NCA team members provide helpful consultation as well as evaluation.	74.2%	79.1%	76.2%	70.3%	52.6%	77.1%
The NCA staff support provided to institutions is adequate.	73.2%	80.1%	70.0%	69.0%	66.7%	72.1%
The NCA is responsive to the needs of member institutions.	70.8%	81.7%	65.9%	65.2%	52.6%	71.4%
NCA workshops and training programs are helpful.	67.1%	75.8%	63.2%	63.7%	56.4%	65.0%
The NCA is proactive and promotes positive change.	66.1%	76.1%	61.0%	63.9%	48.7%	65.0%
The NCA annual meeting provides a valuable forum for the sharing of ideas.	65.8%	80.7%	57.0%	68.4%	35.9%	61.4%
The NCA responds to institutional requests for approval of changes in a timely manner.	64.6%	68.8%	64.6%	62.0%	55.1%	63.6%
The NCA provides appropriate leadership to shape the future of higher education.	59.2%	70.1%	56.5%	51.9%	30.8%	64.3%
The NCA takes negative actions when warranted.	50.9%	61.1%	47.1%	41.8%	37.2%	52.9%
NCA accreditation gives appropriate consideration to distance learning and the use of new technologies.	42.1%	44.5%	38.6%	44.3%	30.8%	46.4%
NCA accreditation provides appropriate review of international and other off-site programs.	34.0%	31.2%	33.2%	43.0%	34.6%	30.7%

*Scale of 1-5 with 1=Strongly Agree

Committee on Organizational Effectiveness and Future Directions

Survey of Member Institutions
October 1996

Effectiveness of Accrediting Process at Facilitating Institutional Change

Please indicate how *effective* the accreditation process has been in *facilitating changes* in the following areas *at your institution.*

	Percent Rating Effective or Very Effective					
	All Institutions	Assoc. of Arts College	Bacc. College	Master's Univ/ College	Res/Doct Univ	Prof/Spec Inst
Improving assessment of student learning	79.6%	86.7%	74.4%	78.5%	62.8%	82.9%
Evaluating institutional effectiveness	78.4%	84.7%	79.4%	51.9%	50.0%	86.4%
Fostering ongoing planning	73.6%	80.1%	72.7%	70.3%	50.0%	77.9%
Stimulating program review	72.4%	76.1%	72.2%	70.9%	51.3%	78.6%
Clarifying institutional mission and goals	68.0%	77.1%	64.6%	63.3%	43.6%	72.9%
Improving general education	51.6%	65.1%	48.9%	39.2%	26.9%	54.3%
Clarifying governance roles	49.4%	54.5%	48.9%	43.7%	30.8%	56.4%
Improving administrative leadership	47.2%	53.5%	43.5%	43.7%	24.4%	56.4%
Improving student services	43.8%	60.5%	36.3%	31.0%	21.8%	46.4%
Improving instruction	42.2%	55.2%	38.6%	28.5%	28.2%	43.6%
Considering issues of diversity	41.1%	42.2%	39.9%	41.1%	28.2%	47.9%
Fostering stakeholder and community involvement	39.1%	46.8%	39.0%	32.9%	24.4%	37.9%
Improving resource allocation procedures	33.4%	36.9%	31.8%	28.5%	15.4%	44.3%
Improving staff quality	33.2%	41.2%	27.4%	24.1%	15.4%	45.7%
Improving graduate education	16.9%	0.0%	15.7%	36.1%	20.5%	31.4%

*Scale of 1-5 with 1=Very Effective

Committee on Organizational Effectiveness and Future Directions

Survey of Member Institutions
October 1996

Benefits of Institutional Accreditation

Indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the benefits of institutional accreditation.

	Percent Who Agree or Strongly Agree					
Institutional accreditation...	All Institutions	Assoc. of Arts College	Bacc. College	Master's Univ/ College	Res/Doct Univ	Prof/Spec Inst
encourages the use of student outcomes assessment as a tool to improve teaching and learning processes.	89.0%	91.7%	87.5%	91.8%	76.9%	89.3%
identifies important issues institutions need to address.	88.6%	91.7%	89.7%	86.7%	71.8%	91.4%
stimulates institutional improvement.	84.9%	91.7%	82.5%	83.5%	61.5%	88.6%
assures that an institution is meeting minimum standards of educational quality.	84.9%	89.0%	82.5%	85.4%	66.7%	89.3%
certifies that institutions are meeting their educational objectives.	84.8%	88.7%	84.3%	83.6%	69.2%	87.2%
promotes academic excellence.	80.1%	89.7%	74.9%	76.6%	55.1%	85.7%
helps institutions meet accountability requirements.	80.0%	85.1%	81.2%	72.8%	66.7%	82.9%
inspires public confidence in institutions of higher education.	73.3%	81.1%	68.6%	65.2%	62.8%	79.3%
encourages stability in the operation of member institutions.	72.4%	74.8%	73.5%	69.6%	53.9%	79.3%
contributes to member institutions in ways that specialized program accreditation cannot.	71.6%	75.1%	74.4%	76.0%	62.8%	59.3%
develops a broad consensus on standards of good practice in higher education.	70.4%	78.7%	62.8%	69.0%	50.0%	77.9%
helps institutions meet constituencies' needs (public, students).	57.0%	63.8%	51.1%	55.7%	34.6%	65.7%
promotes articulation and coordination among member institutions.	45.3%	53.2%	46.6%	39.2%	24.4%	45.0%
encourages innovation in member institutions.	34.9%	44.2%	30.9%	28.5%	15.4%	39.3%
promotes articulation and coordination between institutions of higher education and secondary schools.	26.8%	31.9%	26.9%	19.0%	16.7%	30.0%

*Scale of 1-5 with 1=Strongly Agree

Committee on Organizational Effectiveness and Future Directions

Survey of Member Institutions
October 1996

Impact of Trends on Future NCA Activities

How do you rate the likely impact of each of the following trends on the *future* activities of the North Central Association?

	Percent Rating as Major Future Impact					
	All Institutions	Assoc. of Arts College	Bacc. College	Master's Univ/ College	Res/Doct Univ	Prof/Spec Inst
Increasing demands for accountability	79.5%	86.7%	77.6%	79.7%	60.3%	77.2%
Expanding use of distance learning	78.4%	81.7%	71.8%	83.5%	68.0%	70.1%
Increasing attention to teaching and learning	72.2%	81.1%	68.2%	72.2%	61.5%	65.7%
Expanding use of Internet and other improved global communications	70.6%	79.1%	63.2%	71.5%	57.7%	70.0%
Dwindling financial resources for higher education	67.0%	64.8%	65.5%	77.2%	60.3%	66.4%
Increasing use of computers for instruction and instructional support	66.9%	73.8%	65.0%	68.4%	53.9%	60.7%
Expanding requirements for standard performance indicators	63.3%	72.1%	56.1%	57.5%	57.7%	55.0%
Increasing use of contracted, shared, or cooperative academic programs	62.5%	73.8%	53.4%	61.4%	48.7%	62.2%
Increasing role of academic institutions in credentialing/ certifying learning acquired outside the institution	60.4%	66.8%	54.7%	63.9%	50.0%	57.1%
Increasing number of programs that are offered in more than one accrediting region	59.9%	64.1%	54.7%	61.4%	59.0%	57.9%
Increasing use of adjunct and part-time faculty	59.7%	62.8%	56.2%	59.5%	50.0%	65.7%
Increasing rate of change in the external environment	56.5%	61.1%	54.3%	58.9%	39.8%	56.4%
The changing workplace and needs for retraining	56.1%	70.4%	45.7%	51.9%	37.2%	57.2%
Increasing collaboration between institutions and industry	54.3%	70.4%	39.9%	51.9%	38.5%	54.3%
Changing student demographics (increasing minority, adult, part-time, etc.)	53.8%	52.5%	57.9%	50.6%	44.9%	59.3%
Increasing collaboration among colleges and universities	53.1%	62.1%	44.9%	55.1%	35.9%	54.3%
Increasing competition for students	52.9%	49.5%	55.2%	60.1%	39.7%	55.7%
Increasing international activity by institutions	51.5%	47.8%	52.5%	58.9%	48.7%	51.4%
Changing views of tenure	48.2%	46.5%	43.5%	54.4%	51.3%	50.7%
Developing a national data base for higher education	44.4%	53.8%	35.9%	46.2%	33.3%	42.1%
Changing methods of paying for higher education	43.4%	48.5%	40.4%	43.7%	21.8%	48.6%

*Scale of 1-5 with 5=major future impact

Committee on Organizational Effectiveness and Future Directions
Survey of Member Institutions
October 1996

Views of Future NCA Accreditation Activities

Indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements about *future* NCA accreditation.

	Percent Who Agree or Strongly Agree					
NCA accreditation...	All Institutions	Assoc. of Arts College	Bacc. College	Master's Univ/ College	Res/Doct Univ	Prof/Spec Inst
should provide for increased consideration of institutional uniqueness	80.3%	74.8%	81.2%	81.0%	80.8%	90.0%
should place increased emphasis on qualitative factors	73.9%	73.8%	75.8%	73.4%	65.4%	76.4%
should provide alternative processes through which the reaccreditation of well-established institutions may be achieved	71.1%	68.8%	74.4%	33.5%	76.9%	62.9%
should give increased attention to non-traditional practices in higher education	69.1%	76.1%	59.6%	73.4%	55.1%	72.1%
should provide separate processes, structures, and standards for different types of institutions (doctoral, 4-year, 2-year, etc.)	66.4%	65.1%	68.2%	66.5%	76.9%	60.7%
should involve the cooperation of specialized program accrediting agencies in developing a common data base and report form	63.1%	61.8%	58.8%	66.5%	69.2%	65.7%
should be more of an ongoing continuous process	47.1%	53.2%	44.0%	50.0%	30.8%	45.0%
should consider alternatives to site visits for comprehensive evaluations	44.6%	41.9%	40.8%	52.5%	57.7%	40.0%
should place increased emphasis on retention rates, program completion and graduation rates	41.8%	41.9%	40.8%	43.0%	44.9%	40.0%
should call for greater faculty involvement in the accreditation process	30.3%	33.2%	33.2%	29.1%	19.2%	27.1%
should place increased emphasis on quantitative factors	25.0%	30.2%	21.1%	22.2%	21.8%	25.0%
should call for greater involvement of individuals and groups outside the formal institutional structure in the accreditation process	24.9%	35.6%	19.7%	24.1%	14.1%	17.2%
should call for greater student involvement in the accreditation process	21.9%	26.6%	20.2%	22.8%	15.4%	17.1%
should require more frequent comprehensive evaluations	5.7%	8.6%	40.0%	5.7%	3.9%	2.9%

*Scale of 1-5 with 1=Strongly Agree

Committee on Organizational Effectiveness and Future Directions

Survey of Member Institutions
October 1996

Future Directions of North Central Association

Indicate your reaction to the following statements about the *future* of the North Central Association.

The North Central Association...	Percent Who Agree or Strongly Agree					
	All Institutions	Assoc. of Arts College	Bacc. College	Master's Univ/ College	Res/Doct Univ	Prof/Spec Inst
should increase communication with Congress, state/federal agencies, and other organizations to strengthen the understanding of voluntary accreditation.	71.9%	73.4%	73.5%	72.2%	64.1%	70.0%
should conduct more research on accreditation and its contribution to improving higher education.	71.8%	73.1%	70.4%	75.3%	65.4%	70.7%
should make greater use of technology in the accreditation process (world wide web, Internet, electronic forms, etc.).	68.9%	72.1%	62.3%	76.0%	68.0%	65.0%
should assume a leadership role in advocating higher education issues with Congress, state/federal agencies and other organizations.	66.4%	68.8%	65.9%	67.1%	52.6%	69.3%
should conduct more workshops and training programs related to new initiatives.	61.9%	71.8%	57.0%	60.8%	42.3%	60.7%
should encourage increased disclosure of the results of institutional evaluation to the public.	46.8%	56.8%	43.5%	40.5%	38.5%	42.2%
should increase the size of its staff.	14.7%	16.6%	13.0%	12.0%	9.0%	19.3%

*Scale of 1-5 with 1=Strongly Agree

Committee on Organizational Effectiveness and Future Directions

Survey of Member Institutions
October 1996

Responses by Carnegie Classification

	Percent of Respondents					
	All Institutions (900)	Assoc. of Arts College (301)	Bacc. College (223)	Master's Univ/ College (158)	Res/Doct Univ (78)	Prof/Spec Inst (140)
Believe that benefits of NCA accreditation exceed or are equal to costs	86.2%	91.4%	84.8%	86.7%	68.0%	87.2%
Find components of the accreditation process to be useful or very useful:						
Self study process and report	95.4%	98.0%	94.2%	94.3%	87.2%	97.9%
Evaluation visit	86.0%	92.4%	87.0%	81.6%	64.1%	87.9%
Team report	84.7%	91.0%	83.4%	82.9%	62.8%	87.1%
Review process after visit	60.4%	67.4%	59.6%	61.4%	39.8%	57.2%

Committee on Organizational Effectiveness and Future Directions

Survey of Member Institutions
October 1996

Ratings of Criteria for Accreditation

	Percent Rating Appropriate or Very Appropriate					
	All Institutions	Assoc. of Arts College	Bacc. College	Master's Univ/ College	Res/Doct Univ	Prof/Spec Inst
Appropriateness of Criteria for Accreditation– percent who rate criterion appropriate or very appropriate						
1. The institution has clear and publicly stated purposes consistent with its mission and appropriate to an institution of higher education.	98.7%	99.0%	97.8%	100.0%	98.7%	97.9%
2. The institution has effectively organized the human, financial, and physical resources necessary to accomplish its purposes.	98.1%	97.7%	99.1%	97.5%	98.7%	97.9%
3. The institution is accomplishing its educational and other purposes.	98.8%	99.3%	98.2%	100.0%	94.9%	99.3%
4. The institution can continue to accomplish its purposes and strengthen its educational effectiveness.	96.6%	97.0%	96.9%	96.8%	93.6%	96.4%
5. The institution demonstrates integrity in its practices and relationships.	94.4%	94.7%	96.0%	93.7%	91.0%	94.3%

Committee on Organizational Effectiveness and Future Directions

Survey of Consultant-Evaluators
October 1996

	Percent Satisfied or Very Satisfied
Collegiality of accreditation teams	95.2%
Materials provided to consultant-evaluators prior to visits	94.0%
Ability of teams to reach consensus	93.6%
Professionalism of accreditation teams	93.2%
Extent to which team reports are based on General Institutional Requirements and Criteria for Accreditation	90.4%
Timeliness in payment of honorarium and expenses	90.0%
Consultant-evaluator appointment process	86.5%
Logistical arrangements made for accreditation visits	85.7%
Length of time scheduled for comprehensive visits	80.5%
NCA staff support provided to consultant-evaluators prior to visits	78.9%
NCA staff support provided to consultant-evaluators during visits	76.1%
Amount of time available after visits to complete team reports	74.9%
Orientation/mentoring of new consultant-evaluators during accreditation visits	68.1%
Length of time scheduled for focused visits	60.2%
Evaluation process for consultant-evaluators	55.4%
Amount of time available during visits to prepare draft reports	49.8%
Reappointment process for consultant-evaluators	47.0%
Feedback given to consultant-evaluators	29.9%